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AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

24. (Currently Amended) A method of packaging multiple containers in unitized packages, wherein a first unitized package includes containers having a first diameter and a second unitized package includes containers having a second diameter, wherein the second diameter is at least 10% smaller than the first diameter, the method comprising the steps of:

providing containers having the first diameter to an applying machine, said applying machine including a drum with a plurality of jaw pairs, each jaw pair spaced at a pitch length from a circumferentially adjacent pair,

moving a first carrier through said applying machine, said first carrier having a plurality of transverse pairs of apertures, centers of each transverse pair of apertures spaced at said pitch length from centers of longitudinally adjacent transverse pairs;

positioning said first carrier over the containers having the first diameter to form the first unitized package;

adjusting a transverse distance between each jaw pair of said plurality of jaw pairs around a circumference of the drum while maintaining said pitch length between circumferentially adjacent jaw pairs;

providing containers having the second diameter to said applying machine;

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moving a second carrier through said applying machine, said second carrier having a plurality of transverse pairs of elongated apertures, centers of each transverse pair of elongated apertures spaced at said pitch length from centers of longitudinally adjacent ~~transverse~~ transverse pairs; and

positioning said second carrier over the containers having the second diameter to form the second unitized package.

25. (Original) The method of Claim 24 wherein said elongated apertures in said second carrier, in an unstressed condition prior to application to the plurality of containers, are approximately four to six times longer than wide.

26. (Original) The method of Claim 24 wherein the first diameter is approximately 3.0" and the second diameter is approximately 2.6".

27. (Original) The method of Claim 24 wherein the first diameter is approximately 3.0" and the second diameter is approximately 2.4".

28. (Original) The method of Claim 24 wherein the first diameter is approximately 2.6" and the second diameter is approximately 2.3".

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29. (Original) The method of Claim 24 further comprising:
reducing an overall length of said second carrier after said second carrier is positioned over the containers to form said second package.

30. (Original) The method of Claim 24 further comprising:
moving an adjustable hub of said drum to adjust said transverse distance between each jaw pair of said plurality of jaw pairs around a circumference of the drum while maintaining said pitch length between circumferentially adjacent jaw pairs.

31. (Original) A method of packaging multiple containers in a unitized package, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a first plurality of containers having a first diameter to an applying machine, said applying machine including a drum with a plurality of jaw pairs, each jaw pair spaced at a first length from a circumferentially adjacent jaw pair;

moving a first carrier through said applying machine, said first carrier having a plurality of apertures and a pitch equaling said first length between a center of each longitudinally adjacent aperture;

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positioning said first carrier over said first plurality of containers whereby each aperture engages with one container to form a package having a first container pitch between a center of adjacent containers;

adjusting a transverse distance between each jaw pair of said plurality of jaw pairs around a circumference of said drum while maintaining said first length;

providing a second plurality of containers having a second diameter to said applying machine, said second diameter at least 10% smaller than said first diameter;

moving a second carrier through said applying machine, said second carrier having a plurality of elongated apertures oriented in a longitudinal direction of said second carrier and a pitch between a center of each adjacent elongated aperture having said first length; and

positioning the second carrier over said second plurality of containers whereby each elongated aperture engages with one container to form a package having a second container pitch between a center of adjacent containers, said second container pitch smaller than said first length.

32. (Original) The method of Claim 31 further comprising:

positioning a plurality of relief holes between adjacent longitudinal rows of elongated apertures in the second carrier.

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33. (Original) The method of Claim 31 wherein the first diameter is approximately 3.0" and the second diameter is approximately 2.6".

34. (Original) The method of Claim 31 wherein the first diameter is approximately 3.0" and the second diameter is approximately 2.4".

35. (Original) The method of Claim 31 wherein the first diameter is approximately 2.6" and the second diameter is approximately 2.2".

36. (Original) The method of Claim 31 further comprising:
reducing an overall length of said second carrier after said second carrier is positioned over the containers to form the package.

37. (Original) The method of Claim 31 further comprising:
moving an adjustable hub of said drum to adjust said transverse distance between each jaw pair.

38. (Original) A method of packaging multiple containers in unitized packages, wherein a first unitized package includes containers having a first diameter and a second unitized package includes containers having a second diameter,

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wherein the second diameter is at least 10% smaller than the first diameter, the method comprising the steps of:

providing containers having the first diameter to an applying machine;

moving a first carrier through said applying machine, said first carrier having a plurality of transverse pairs of apertures, centers of each transverse pair of apertures spaced at a pitch length from centers of longitudinally adjacent transverse pairs;

positioning said first carrier over the containers having the first diameter to form the first unitized package;

adjusting said applying machine to accommodate a second carrier having a same said pitch length as said first carrier;

providing containers having the second diameter to said applying machine;

moving said second carrier through said applying machine; and

positioning said second carrier over the containers having the second diameter to form the second unitized package.

39. (Original) The method of Claim 38 further comprising:

adjusting adjacent jaw pairs around a drum of said applying machine to accommodate said second carrier while maintaining a same said pitch length between said first carrier and said second carrier.